



**Subcommittee on National Security,
Emerging Threats and International Relations**

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Congressman Christopher Shays to Convene May 19 Hearing on

***“STAMPING OUT ANTHRAX IN USPS FACILITIES:
TECHNOLOGIES AND PROTOCOLS FOR BIOAGENT DETECTION”***

(Washington, DC) -- Congressman Christopher Shays (CT-4), Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations will convene an oversight hearing to examine available technologies for detecting anthrax and other bioagents, and appropriate protocols for selecting and using those technologies.

Anthrax is an acute infectious disease caused by the spore-forming bacterium called *Bacillus anthracis*. Anthrax spores are found in the soil in many parts of the world and can remain dormant in the environment for many years. Although anthrax occurs most commonly in plant-eating animals, anthrax also can infect humans. The number of living cells in a sample is termed “colony-forming units” (CFU) and is typically reported per gram of material collected (in the case of vacuums) or per square inch (for samples collected using wipes.)

In the fall of 2001, letters contaminated with anthrax resulted in 23 cases of the disease, 5 deaths (including 94-year old Otilie Lundgren of Oxford, Connecticut), and the contamination of numerous U.S. Postal Service facilities (including the Southern Connecticut Processing and Distribution Center in Wallingford, Connecticut).

On or about October 9, 2001, at least two letters containing anthrax spores entered the U.S. mail stream. The letters were addressed to Senator Thomas Daschle and Senator Patrick Leahy. Before being sent on to Brentwood, the Washington, D.C. postal facility that processed mail to the two Senators — the contaminated letters had been processed on high-speed mail-sorting machines at the Hamilton, New Jersey (also known as the Trenton postal facility). Hamilton also processed mail that was then transported to Wallingford for further processing. This hearing will look at these examples in an attempt to answer How sensitive are the methods to detect anthrax in the workplace, and how appropriate are the protocols for selecting and using those detection methods.

The Monday, May 19, 2003 hearing will convene at 1:00 p.m. in room 2247 of the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, D.C.

Witnesses

Dr. Keith A. Rhodes, Chief Technologist, General Accounting Office, will present testimony on some preliminary results about the testing approach to detect anthrax at the Wallingford Postal Facility, as well as the communication of test results.

Dr. Robert G. Hamilton, Director of Johns Hopkins Dermatology Allergy and Clinical Immunology will present testimony on sampling and testing methodologies and techniques, the adequacy of the USPS anthrax sampling plan, and the possible elements of a government-wide approach to testing and validation protocols and methods.

COL. Erik A. Henshell, Commander, U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, will present testimony on the medical and health implications of anthrax test results, and procedures for notifying and protecting the public.

Mr. Thomas G. Day, Vice President of Engineering, United States Postal Service, will present testimony on the derivation and applicability of the USPS anthrax sampling plan, including the testing and validation process, and the timeliness and completeness of information provided to employees and the public about contamination at Wallingford.

Mr. William Burrus, President, American Postal Workers Union, will present testimony on the sampling methodology employed at Wallingford, the experience of the union in obtaining timely, factual information about the Wallingford test process and results, and how the sampling and communication of information effect efforts to protect the safety and health of workers.

Mr. Kenneth Martinez, Engineer, Division of Surveillance, Health Hazard Evaluations and Field, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, will present testimony on the role of CDC with regard to sample collection, analysis, and interpretation of quantitative test results for USPS, as well as the advice CDC gave to USPS with regard to sampling, testing, and interpretation of test results.

Dr. James L. Hadler, State Epidemiologist, State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, will present testimony on the role of the Connecticut Department of Public Health with regard to sample collection, analysis, and interpretation of quantitative test results for USPS and the advice given to USPS with regard to sampling, testing, and interpretation of test results.

Mr. Davis Lane, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, will present testimony on the role of OSHA in dealing with anthrax or a similar workplace contamination, any applicable standards for notifying employees about workplace hazards, and the timeliness and completeness of employee notification of contamination at Wallingford.

